

In the News

Courts Recognized for Outreach at East Bay Stand Down

In an effort to reach out to their communities, staff members of the Superior Courts of Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco Counties went on location, holding court sessions at Camp Parks in Dublin. In return, they gained public trust, cleared outstanding warrants, and garnered positive media coverage.

A photo and caption that appeared in the September 10 edition of the *San Ramon Valley Times* described the courts' involvement in this year's East Bay Stand Down, an event designed to give homeless veterans and their families the opportunity to receive information and services to assist them in their reintegration into mainstream society. During the stand down, held September 7–10, court officers held "homeless court," a special court session for homeless veterans to resolve misdemeanor warrants and traffic holds.

This "on location" court session sought to improve access to the court for homeless veterans. Sponsors of the program

stressed that the presence of warrants and fear of incarceration prevent many homeless individuals from gaining employment and/or access to social services and treatment—yet court is the only place for them to clear their records.

According to Superior Court of Alameda County Judge D. Ronald Hyde, who spearheaded this outreach effort on behalf of the courts, "court participation creates a greater level of trust and comfort with homeless defendants because they voluntarily sign up to attend the stand down to take responsibility for their past conduct. And sentences for their infractions are often productive, requiring participation in programs that offer help in overcoming social problems, enhancing job skills, and finding employment and housing."

Homeless court was a cooperative effort between judges and court administrators, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Vietnam Veterans of Diablo Valley, the Ladies Auxiliary VFW,



Judge D. Ronald Hyde and Court Clerk Rae Harrison, from the Superior Court of Alameda County, help homeless veterans clear up outstanding warrants resulting from misdemeanors and traffic tickets at the East Bay Stand Down in Dublin. Photo: Doug Duran, courtesy of the San Ramon Valley Times; reprinted with permission

and the offices of the district attorney and public defender. In addition, approximately 25 law students from John F. Kennedy University volunteered to help with the paperwork and preparation of court dockets. "The law students interviewed veterans, contacted courts, and were a great help in getting the cases ready," says Rae Harrison, a court clerk from the Superior Court of Alameda County, who assisted with the homeless court.

During the stand down, court officials heard nearly 200 cases, mostly misdemeanor criminal infractions and traffic tickets.

"It was a very rewarding experience," adds Judge Hyde. "Veterans from all over the Bay

Area were able to get help and clear up their records. I definitely want to do it again next year and would like to increase the number of counties that participate."

Another court-related program in the news in recent months:

Los Angeles County Domestic Violence Clinics

A story titled "Domestic Violence Clinic Seeks Publicity" described the clinics available at courthouses in Los Angeles County that help residents fill out court documents and obtain temporary restraining orders.

San Gabriel Valley Daily Tribune, August 28, 2000 ■

Monterey County Gets Preclearance for Unification

The U.S. Department of Justice granted preclearance to implement Proposition 220 in Monterey County, clearing the way for its municipal and superior courts to unify into a single, countywide superior court, pending majority approval by the county's judges.

The California Attorney General filed for preclearance of the consolidation after the U.S. Supreme Court, in a case of first impression, ruled that state statutes resulting in consolidation needed to be precleared. Preclearance is required to guard against electoral systems that are considered discriminatory against racial groups.

Of California's 58 counties, all 56 eligible counties have voted to unify trial court operations to add flexibility in case assignments, consolidate court resources, and save taxpayer dollars. Until this decision, Monterey and Kings Counties were the only two counties ineligible to vote for trial court unification, since both counties were designated as preclearance jurisdictions under the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Court rules specify that county courts may vote on unification in two ways. All sitting municipal and superior court judges can approve the action by unanimous written consent or by a majority vote over a 30-day period. Monterey County is expected to request a vote on trial court unification before the end of the year.

● A reference list showing all the unified courts in California along with the dates they unified is now available online at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference.

Governor Approves New Judgeships

Governor Gray Davis signed legislation in September that creates 20 new trial court judgeships and 12 new appellate judgeships in California courts. This brings California's judiciary—already the largest single judicial system in the world—to a total of 1,611 judges, in addition to hundreds of commissioners and referees. Sponsored by the Judicial Council, Senate Bill 1857 was authored by Senator John Burton and takes effect January 1, 2001.

"State courts will now take another step forward to provide timely justice for Californians," says Chief Justice Ronald M. George. "I thank both the Governor and Legislature for their support of this important legislation, which helps meet the courts' long-standing need for more judgeships to handle their increasingly complex caseloads."

The new judgeships are allocated as follows:

- One superior court judgeship each in Alameda, Butte, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Sonoma, Ventura, and Yolo Counties;

- Two superior court judgeships in Sacramento County;

- Three superior court judgeships in San Bernardino County;

- Twelve appellate judgeships as follows: one each in the First, Third, Fifth, and Sixth Districts, and four each in the Second District (in a newly created division) and Fourth District (one each in Divisions One and Two and two in Division Three).

OTHER COURT-RELATED BILLS

Bills recently signed by Governor Davis include these court-related measures:

Senate Bill 2140 (Burton)—Trial Court Employees: Co-sponsored by the Judicial

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Court Reps Revisit Community-Focused Planning

Strategic plans submitted by 52 of the state's 58 trial courts were the centerpiece of a Judicial Council planning workshop in March. As a follow-up to that meeting, the Community-Focused Court Planning Implementation Committee, with the financial assistance of the State Justice Institute, held a one-day workshop, titled Trial Court Planning Workshop 2000, on October 11 in San Francisco.

The program—facilitated by R. Dale Lefever, Ph.D., with assistance from consultant Shelley Stump—was aimed at supporting community-focused court planning efforts across the state. The agenda focused on high-priority areas such as:

- ▶ The multiyear and annual planning cycles;
- ▶ Elements of strategic, operational, and action plans, as well as progress reports;
- ▶ The relationship between the trial court budget process and strategic planning;
- ▶ Inspiring judicial leadership in community-focused strategic planning;

▶ Maintaining community interest and involvement in court planning; and

▶ Building the courts' infrastructure to support planning.

"The workshop provided a good recap of the issues facing our court when we plan for next year's budget," says Mona Hall, finance director for the Superior Court of San Mateo County. "We generally knew the procedures involved, but we now have a better idea of where the AOC is in the budget process."

The workshop also enabled members of the local planning teams—made up of judges, court administrators, and members of the public—to share their successes through "best practices" sessions and to discuss common challenges they have encountered in developing and refining their community-focused planning processes.

● For more information, contact Fred Miller, project manager from the Administrative Office of the Courts, 415-865-7709, e-mail: fred.miller@jud.ca.gov. ■



(Left to right) Justice Kathleen E. O'Leary, Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, and consultants Shelley Stump and R. Dale Lefever, Ph.D., respond to participants' questions at the Trial Court Planning Workshop held October 11 in San Francisco.

County Profile Imperial



The Imperial County Courthouse in the city of El Centro was dedicated in 1924.

Geographic area: 4,597 square miles bordering Mexico to the south, Riverside County to the north, San Diego County to the west, and the state of Arizona to the east

Population: 154,549, making it the 31st largest county in the state

Population growth: By 2020 the population is expected to grow to 298,000

Demographics:

Age: 0–19 ≈ 36%; 20–39 ≈ 32%; 40–59 ≈ 20%; 60–79 ≈ 10%; 80+ ≈ 2%

Race/Ethnicity: Hispanic ≈ 72%; White ≈ 22%; Black ≈ 3%; Asian or Pacific Islander ≈ 2%; American Indian ≈ 1%

Number of court locations: 7

Number of authorized judges: 9

Number of staff: 94

Caseload: Filings for 1999–2000 totaled 56,280

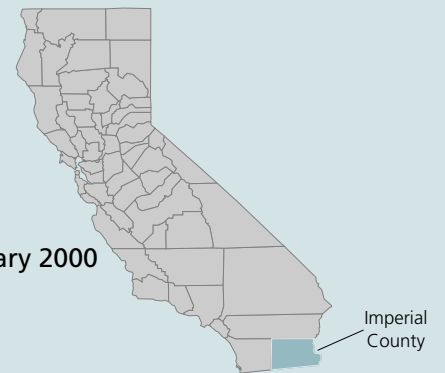
Annual operating budget: \$6,335,000 as of January 2000

Presiding judge: Christopher W. Yeager

Executive officer: Lyla Corfman

Of note: Imperial County, originally part of San Diego County, is home to Salton Sea, the largest inland body of water in California.

Sources: Superior Court of Imperial County; Imperial County Web site; U.S. Census Bureau; California State Department of Finance



Judgeships

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Council, labor organizations, and the California State Association of Counties, SB 2140 adopts the unanimous recommendations of the Task Force on Trial Court Employees for establishing a uniform personnel status for California's 18,000 trial court employees. The bill also addresses a range of issues that include labor relations, employment protection systems, selection and advancement issues, retirement, and deferred compensation.

Assembly Bill 1955 (Assembly Judiciary Committee)—Judges' Retirement/Extended Service Incentive Program: The bill creates an Extended Service Incentive Program to encourage judges who have reached the

maximum retirement benefit level to remain in public service. It requires the judge to serve at least three years past the time he or she is first eligible to retire. The bill implements concepts included in the recommendations of the Task Force on the Quality of Justice, Subcommittee on Quality of Judicial Service.

Senate Bill 2160 (Schiff)—Representation of Dependent Children: The bill creates a presumption that counsel should be appointed to represent a child in a juvenile dependency proceeding unless the court makes findings in the record that the child would not benefit from the appointment of counsel. It requires the court to ensure that each child receives adequate representation by requiring that appointed counsel adhere to caseload standards adopted by the Judicial Council.

Senate Bill 1533 (Costa)—Trial Court Funding Cleanup:

The bill makes necessary technical changes to bring existing statutes into conformity with the Trial Court Funding Act of 1997. It also requires the Judicial Council to provide for representation, defense, and indemnification of judges, court officers, and employees, and to adopt rules of court requiring the Administrative Office of the Courts to manage claims and actions involving the trial courts and their officers and employees.

Assembly Bill 2912 (Assembly Judiciary Committee)—Alternative Dispute Resolution/Changes to Courts' Reference Authority: The bill revises the courts' authority to appoint referees for discovery and other disputes. It implements the rec-

ommendations of the Judicial Council's Task Force on the Quality of Justice, Subcommittee on Alternative Dispute Resolution.

● The full text of all these bills can be found on the California Courts Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courtadmin/cr-legis.htm. ■



Probation Services Task Force Members

Patricia Bamattre-Manoukian, Chair
Associate Justice,
Court of Appeal, Sixth
Appellate District

Juan Arambula
Supervisor, Fresno
County

Denny Bungarz
Supervisor, Glenn
County

Alan M. Crogan
Chief Probation Offi-
cer, San Diego County

William H. Davidson
Chief Probation Offi-
cer, Merced County
Probation Department

Terry Friedman
Presiding Judge of
the Juvenile Court,
Superior Court of Los
Angeles County

Sheila Gonzalez
Executive Officer,
Superior Court of
Ventura County

Bryce Johnson
Probation Officer,
Mariposa County Pro-
bation Department

Michael D. Johnson
County Administra-
tive Officer, Solano
County

Phil Kader
Probation Services
Manager, Fresno
County Probation
Department

William S. Lebov
Judge, Superior Court
of Yolo County

Bill Mahoney
Assistant County
Executive Officer,
Orange County

Kevin M. McCarthy
Judge, Superior Court
of San Francisco
County

Barbara McIver
Supervisor, Tehama
County

Ralph Miller
President, Los Ange-
les County Probation
Union

Mike Nevin
Supervisor, San Mateo
County

Frank J. Ochoa
Presiding Judge,
Superior Court of
Santa Barbara County

John P. Rhoads
Chief Probation
Officer, Santa Cruz
County

Michael Roddy
Executive Officer,
Superior Court of
Sacramento County

Judicial Council Creates Two New Task Forces

TASK FORCE TO STUDY PROBATION SERVICES

Chief Justice Ronald M. George has appointed a 19-member Probation Services Task Force to study probation services in California's 58 counties. The panel was jointly created by the Judicial Council and the California State Association of Counties.

The primary charge of the task force is to assess probation programs, services, organizational structures, and funding related to adult and juvenile probation services currently provided by the counties to the courts, probationers, and the general public.

"The success of drug courts, domestic violence courts, and other innovative criminal justice

projects demonstrates how effective a solid bond between the courts and probation services can be in creatively addressing and resolving difficult areas," says Chief Justice George.

The task force will present its findings and recommendations to the council, the Governor, the Legislature, and the California State Association of Counties in fall 2001.

Justice Patricia Bamattre-Manoukian of the Court of Appeal, Sixth Appellate District, is chair of the task force. The Chief Justice selected Justice Manoukian because of her experience as a deputy district attorney, a trial court judge, an appellate justice, and a former Judicial Council member. "She has a solid un-

derstanding of the relationship between probation services and the courts," he says.

TASK FORCE FOR UNREPRESENTED LITIGANTS

In response to the growing number of Californians who need legal services but cannot afford an attorney when they go to court, the Judicial Council approved the creation of a new task force to improve access to justice for unrepresented litigants.

The council approved the Task Force for Unrepresented Litigants at the recommendation of the State Bar of California Board of Governors and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The new panel, expected to be named by November, will

consist of 15 to 21 members who will be appointed by Chief Justice Ronald M. George, chair of the Judicial Council. The charge of the task force is to:

- Coordinate the statewide response of the bench and bar to the needs of unrepresented parties and help share information about model programs;

- Finalize development of and implement a statewide "proper action plan";

- Develop resources for proper services, particularly those activities in the proper action plan that require significant funding; and

- Make recommendations to the Judicial Council, the State Bar, and other appropriate institutions about other measures that should be considered to improve court services for unrepresented parties.

● For more information, contact Bonnie Hough, 415-865-7668, e-mail: bonnie.hough@jud.ca.gov. ■

San Mateo County Putting Children First

In a recent address at the opening of a family law information center, Chief Justice Ronald M. George reminded listeners that the Judicial Council's primary goal is to increase access to justice. He stressed the need for courts to take innovative approaches to serving the public.

Mirroring the Chief Justice's sentiments, on October 5 the Superior Court of San Mateo County, the Family Support Division of the District Attorney's Office, and the Human Services Agency of San Mateo County, together with several community and nonprofit agencies, sponsored a free informational presentation on family law issues and community resources for parents and families at Sequoia High School in Redwood City. This is the third year the county has presented "Putting Children First," a collaborative community outreach project by San Mateo County agencies, groups, and individuals to link families to legal, financial, health care, shelter, domestic violence protection, educational, mental, and emotional resources.

Participants received information on child support calculations, tips on navigating the legal system, and free consultations with a family law attorney, family therapist, or counselor. Attendees had the opportunity to visit information tables and meet with community representatives from a variety of social services, health, legal, educational, and family-related organizations.

In addition to handing out informational materials and offering free consultations, county volunteers presented dramatized scenarios and panel discussions that gave parents the opportunity to learn about child and spousal support, child custody, visita-

tion, shared parenting plans, domestic violence, alternatives to the court process, and minimization of the effects of separation and divorce on children. Speakers included local family counselors, child educators, judges, and family lawyers.

● For more information, contact Monica Rands, Family Law Facilitator, Superior Court of San Mateo County, 650-599-7212. ■



In addition to handing out informational materials and offering free consultations, county volunteers at Putting Children First presented skits and panel discussions on specific family law issues. (Above) A scene from one of the skits depicts a father (Ignacio Guerrero, Family Support Officer, San Mateo District Attorney's Office) receiving advice from a family support officer (Shannon Smyth-Mendoza, Deputy District Attorney, San Mateo District Attorney's Office). (Left) Supervising Family Law Judge Stephen M. Hall, Superior Court of San Mateo County. (Below) Clown/magician Steve Coehler entertains children so their parents can receive counseling and information. Photos: Courtesy of the Superior Court of San Mateo County

